

Washington, D.C. - Rep. Peter Welch amended the Small Business Fairness in Contracting Act on the floor of the U.S. House to include support for "green" small businesses.

Welch's action creates an improved opportunity for environmentally responsible Vermont small businesses to do business with the federal government.

The Act, which passed this morning 409 to 12, reauthorizes funding for the Small Business Administration's (SBA's) procurement programs and increases the government-wide small business contracting goal from 23 percent to 30 percent. The SBA currently includes goals for contracting with veterans-, women-, and minority-owned small businesses.

Welch's amendment introduces, for the first time, goals for the contracting with businesses that are "green" or use environmentally sound business practices.

"In Vermont and around the country, many of our small businesses are leading the way in environmental stewardship. The federal government should encourage these 'green' practices by doing business with companies that are mindful of their environmental impact," said Welch. "Many Vermont businesses have embraced environmental responsibility because it's good for both their bottom line and good for the community."

Welch believes that the green practices many of our small businesses incorporate- such as conserving energy and water, using sustainable or recycled products, or minimizing generation of waste and release of pollutants- should be rewarded.

"The federal government should support and encourage the growth of businesses that are rooted in our communities, create jobs that will stay close to home, and have environmentally responsible business practices," added Welch.

The amendment sets a 5 percent procurement goal for the entire government to contract with small businesses that are environmentally sound, or "green."

The amendment directs the Administrator of the Small Business Association (SBA) to work with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the General Services Administration (GSA), and other appropriate federal agencies to determine the standards that must be in place for a small business to qualify for a "green" designation.

With the federal government spending over \$417 billion on goods and services in 2006, Welch believes the impact of 'greening' federal suppliers would be a significant boost to promoting new sustainable business practices.

"Small businesses, like so many in my state of Vermont, create two out of every three new jobs, produce 39 percent of the gross national product, and invent more than half the nation's technological innovation," said Welch on the House floor in support of his amendment.

Small businesses make up 99.7 percent of all private employers, creating half of our gross domestic product, and creating up to 80 percent of the new jobs nationwide.